ST. GEORGE JELLETT

In 1881 a private banker who had made $25,000 in a month in the Winnipeg boom came down to London, Ontario, and while arranging his affairs at the Bank of Montreal branch up there, he treated the bank clerks to a most enthusiastic account of the opportunities of the Great West just then opening up.

"What are you young men doing here, strapping fellows poring over books? Get out west. Get out west. Look at me.....!" This together with a look at his increased bank account was altogether too persuasive to be resisted by one of the clerks, St. George Jellett, the son of the late Judge Jellett, of Belleville.

He promptly made up his mind to come west, to join at once a surveying party under George A. Simpson which was then on the eve of departure. His bank-manager being as orthodox and conservative as eastern bank-managers are expected to be, would not hear of such a movement on the part of his clerk. The attitude of the old banker can easily be imagined: "Impossible, quite! Who ever heard of a banker acting in such a way? Outrageous!" For at that time it must be remembered that bank-managers and bank clerks had not fallen upon these modern days of diminished glory in social prestige, and still considered themselves several degrees better socially than the other business men.

The young man was not to be crossed, however. He immediately wired to a relative who was a large shareholder

in the bank and by return wire got permission to leave for the west.

He came up with the survey party, in which Major Saunders of this city also came west, and after the survey was completed for the Edmonton & Saskatchewan Land Company he settled at Clover Bar, acting as manager for the company. The company failed and never paid him his salary, for which Mr. Jellett with his customary geniality will not even bear them a grudge. He took up both farming and trading then in partnership with Philip Ottewell of Clover Bar, and"stayed by" the country for several years, watching it gradually filled with settlers.

Some of these were from Ontario, others from the Western States, a few from the Maritime Provinces, while there was one group of young Scotchmen of good family and considerable means, these last including Archibald Boag, J. Charles Bremner, Frank and Lawrence Adamson and William Edmiston.

For a couple of years Mr. Jellet and his partner operated a free ferry for the benefit of the settlers, and once undertaken they did not care to drop it although it frequently meant being roused from bed to work it. The hours of service were from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m., but they were often extended. On one occasion, however, a genial old-timer who was always a delinquent as to hours in returning from town, was made to lie under his cart all night on the opposite side of the Saskatchewan. Neither of the voluntary ferrymen would give heed to his calls and leave their comfortable beds.

One particularly enterprising venture of the partners was a pork-packing establishment for the preparation of sausages, hams, bacon and lard. The business went along smoothly at first and for one waggonload of these articles sold in Edmonton $250 were realized. But a season of blighted wheat and frozen barley came and as there was no capital behind the venture to secure food for the pigs on their farm, these had to be killed and the first pork-packing plant in this district came to an end.

A large frame building erected by the defunct Land Company for a store served another purpose exceedingly well. The floor in the hall upstairs was the best in the whole country for dancing, and in the store below the bare counters were readily transformed into supper tables on which every dainty in the settlement found a place. Numerous dances were given here, and so enjoyable were they that "half of Edmonton used to come out to them."

Among Mr. Jellet's reminiscences is one most vivid and rather piquant. It is one of a young pioneer who, like the Froggie of nursery rhymes, "would a-wooing go," and as the Young Lady lived four miles away from his bachelor home he usually rode over on his cayuse. This cayuse was a creature of fire and perversity, not at all amenable to the pioneer bachelor's persuasions. So it happened that one night after a long day's work when the young man looked forward to the delightful prospect of an evening at the Young Lady's home he set out on his cayuse.

Suddenly the bit broke in the animal's mouth. The cayuse reared and in a trice swung about for home. It covered the road in race-track time. Its helpless rider, having given up hope of controlling the beast, clung to the pommel in constant fear of the horse stumbling. The cayuse was sure-footed as the western pony is apt to be and reached home safely, making his master dodge the frame of the stable-door as he bounded into the stable.

Now the young man had strict injunctions that he should never stay later thanten o'clock at the house of the Young Lady, and by the time he could prepare again to set out it was too late. He stayed at home consoling himself with the belief that the course of true love never did run smooth. It certainly could not when seeking its goal with the assistance of such a cayuse. A very ornery animal, as the cowboys say!

Mr. Jellet married Miss Fielders, of St. John, who was at that time resident, with her brother, at "Fairholme," Clover Bar. Some time later he moved to Edmonton and has filled several public offices since then.